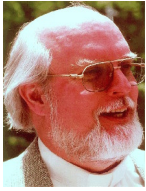


The Companion

Newsletter of the Reformed Church of Poughkeepsie

February 2007



Dear Church Family,

This past Sunday the lectionary Epistle reading was 1 Corinthians 13, St. Paul's description of the behavior of love. Paul begins by saying, as forcefully as possible,

that love is the essential without which all else, no matter how apparently spiritual, is worthless. Paul here echoes Jesus: on Judgment Day even some who performed great miracles in Jesus name will be told that Jesus did not recognize them.

The command to have the heart that God has for our neighbors (isn't this a large part of what it is to love God?) can be overwhelming, leading to guilt and self-doubt. Who can possibly measure up?

In this regard I have found great solace in the words of 1 John: "when our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts." Thomas Merton understood the greatness of God's grace in this regard and so I share with you is justly famous and wise prayer.

MY LORD GOD, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end.

Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you.

And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.

And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Lenten Faith, Hope and Love,

Pastor Bob

Ash Wednesday Here; Lenten Study: "Jesus: Fact or Fiction?"

Ash Wednesday, February 21, the first day of Lent, will begin with a 7:30 p.m. 'Pot Luck Supper.' The good folk from Arlington Reformed will be joining and supporting us by bringing salads and desserts. The combined supper will be followed by a special Lenten worship service.

Lent is forty 'fasting' days – Ash Wednesday through Holy Saturday, excluding the Sundays -- dedicated to the development of faith in preparation for Holy Week and Easter. Palm/Passion Sunday this year is April 1st, Easter April 8th.

The Wednesday evenings following Ash Wednesday will be Lenten conversations on **JESUS: Fact or Fiction?** – a video based discussion course.

JESUS: Fact or Fiction? discusses some of the toughest questions about Jesus and Christianity.

– Is there historical evidence to support the belief that Jesus even lived, much less that the story of his birth could be true?

– Is the Bible trustworthy and what does 'trustworthy' mean?

JESUS: Fact or Fiction? gathers leading scholars, historians, and writers (including Ravi Zacharias, Paul Maier, Gary Habermas, William Dembski, Lee Strobel, and Josh McDowell) who offer evidence for the reliability of the Christian worldview and tackle dozens of the theological difficulties attaching to the Christian perspective.

"**JESUS: Fact or Fiction?** is designed for today's postmodern culture — reared in skepticism and accustomed to instant information and cutting-edge technology," said Paul Eshleman, president of The JESUS Film Project.

JESUS: Fact or Fiction? includes the 93-minute version of The JESUS Film Project's "JESUS," the most watched film in history with more

than 5 billion viewings in more than 863 languages of 228 countries.

'Open House' at WNS, March 24

Registration for 2007-2008 school year begins on February 1 for the community members. Come to "Open House" on March 24 to meet the teachers and get your questions answered regarding our programs!

Tours are available Monday through Friday mornings of the school and facilities. The programs offered are: for threes: 2 day a.m.; 3 day a.m. & p.m.. For fours: 3 day a.m. & p.m.; Pre-k 5 day a.m.

Winter units and stories fill our classrooms. We are thrilled to have snow to explore with the children!

We welcome **Tammy Foster** to our team of teachers for the 2007-2008 school year. **Laura Cothren**, and **Karen Eyster**, and our wonderful team of teachers assistants will be joining us again next year to implement the great programs once again! Tammy will be conducting a kindergarten readiness discussion for our current families on February 28 at 9:30 a.m. and at 1:00 p.m. She will be describing what children need to know in order to meet k-teachers expectations. This discussion is geared for our 4 year old's parents, however, 3's parents are welcome to attend.

Register early, as our space is limited and many places have already been taken by returning families. Registration to the public opens February 1st. Please spread the word!



Sarah Orlando, Director

"SOUPER BOWL" & Super Bowl: Sunday, Feb. 4

Our youth will hold soup pots at church doors on Super Bowl Sunday. They will join young people in churches all across the country to collect money for those who are hungry and hurting. They will be supporting "SOUPER BOWL of Caring."

In 2006, 11,000 groups in all 50 states and outside the United States participated in the Souper Bowl of Caring generating over \$5 million. All of the money collected is donated to a charity selected by the participant. None of the money is sent to Souper Bowl headquarters. Organizers only ask that each participant report their collection so national totals can be determined and announced. Our church will donate the Souper Bowl collection to Hudson River Housing's Hillcrest House.

Since the Souper Bowl of Caring became a national grassroots event in 1993, more than \$33 million has gone to help those in need.

On Sunday, the 4th, 140 million people all over the world will tune in to the Super Bowl football game. There will be parties with abundant food, friendship and fellowship. At the same time, there will be people worrying about staying warm, finding shelter and a warm meal. Support our young people as they demonstrate God's love by loving their neighbors through the Souper Bowl of Caring. It's a simple, yet significant act of caring for others. Drop \$1 in the soup pot as you leave worship next Sunday. Those who need help may not know that you cared, but God will. With the 'Souper Bowl' experience our young people are developing hearts for giving that can last a lifetime.

ACS's Daffodil Days: Order Daffodils Now

This year the American Cancer Society will celebrate the annual Daffodil Days, beginning with Daffodil Sunday on March 18th. Congregants can purchase potted daffodils to be displayed during our church service on Daffodil Sunday. If you would like to join the fight against cancer by participating in the annual Daffodil Days campaign, contact Nanci Peluse at 452-8110. The cost is \$10.00. Checks should be made out to The Reformed Church. The deadline for orders is February 25. Having this visible reminder of hope on display during worship, offers courage and



Gail Wright with her mother Hilda Whitaker at Harvard in 2001

peace for all with cancer.

Gail Whitaker Wright Ordained Into UCC

Gail Whitaker Wright, daughter of Hilda and Burt Whitaker, was ordained into the ministry of the United Church of Christ on January 28 at Memorial Church in Sudbury, Massachusetts. Burt and Hilda attended. Gail was baptized, confirmed and married in our Reformed Church. Gail is currently serving as Associate Pastor of the Littleton United Church of Christ. She received her Master of Divinity degree from Harvard University in 2001.

Reformed Church World Service Update: Remember Our Goats?

Thanks be to God! Your generous gifts have allowed Reformed Church World Service (RCWS) to disburse a record \$1,882,378 this past fiscal year (October 1, 2005 through September 30, 2006).

A large part of these expenditures, of course, were in response to the Asian tsunami that struck at the end of December 2004 (\$355,000), the hurricanes that struck the United States in the summer and fall of 2005 (\$838,432), and the earthquake that struck Pakistan in October 2005 (\$171,781).

In addition to responding to these horrific disasters, RCWS was able to send support for various projects in Africa (\$184,385), give grants for food pantries to all eight RCA regional synods in Canada and the United States

(\$53,950), contribute to the operating support of partner agencies (\$128,502), and provide hunger education and promotional materials for RCA congregations and individuals (\$60,846).

Goats and More Goats! An Update

Remember when we raised money to give goats to Africa? Look at these results. Any of these goat stories could be about the goats we gave!

Your "Give a Goat" generosity has made a difference in the lives of many families in Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, and Niger. A recent report from the Mphatso Synod of the Reformed Church in Mozambique describes the impact that receiving goats has had on the lives of many people and communities.

Aida Botoman, a Reformed Church in Mozambique member in Chitunde District, received two goats. She says that afterward her husband became a Christian and a member of the church because he saw the example of the love of God.

RCWS has disbursed \$319,786 since 1998 to restock or start goat herds in Africa and has recently sent an additional \$10,000 to expand the project.

Another beneficiary thanks God for the gift of goats, which has made a tremendous physical, economic, and spiritual impact on his family's life. Another goat recipient says he can now manage to pay school fees for his children.

The Mphatso Synod report also says that ***the goats are multiplying!*** The project started in communities of the Tete province in 2002. Distribution committees in 35 congregations/communities report that 596 goats were purchased during the first phase of the project and distributed to 298 households. Those original **596 goats in turn have produced 1,510 offspring, which have been given to an additional 755 households!**

Betty Voskuil, Coordinator
Reformed Church World Service

February Birthdays

- 6 - Kristin Orlando
- 10 - Ethel Harris
- 11 - Ruth Bunnell - 101!
- 14 - Alice Sagendorf
- 16 - Chris Altavilla
JoyceAnn Johannesen
- 20 - John Coulter
- 21 - Lucille Neener
- 23 - Shirley Wilson
- 24 - Dick Budd

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